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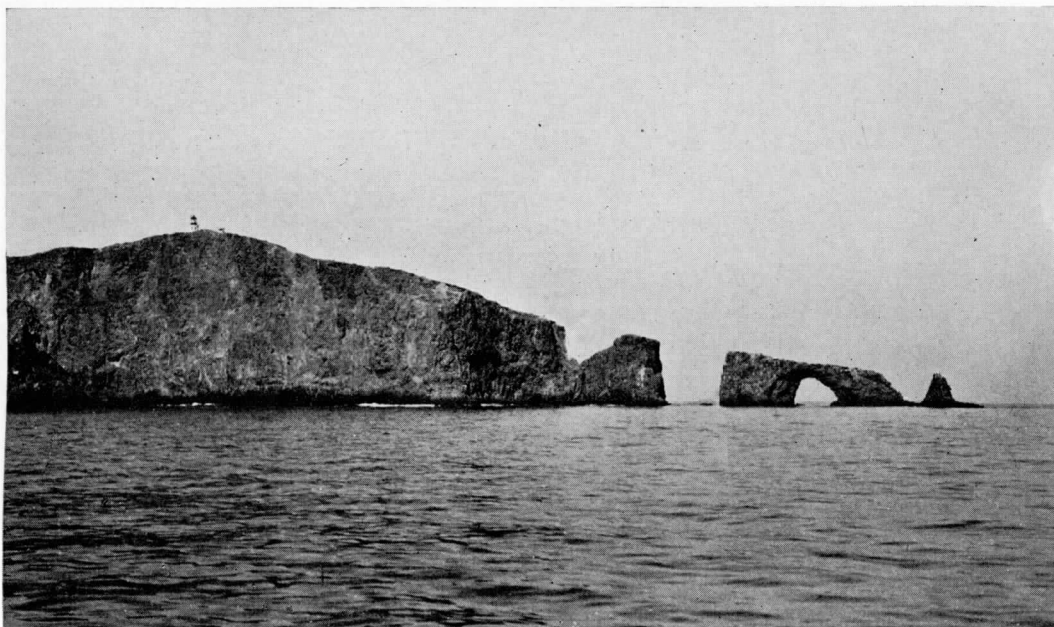
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Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

SAN MIGUEL ISLAND

Studded with rocks and constantly swept by strong winds, Cuyler Harbor is the best of the landing places on San Miguel Island. Somewhere on the slopes above this little bay, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo was said to have been buried.



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

ANACAPA ISLAND

Cabrillo Arch, an interesting rock formation, marks the east end of Anacapa Island. This photograph also shows the Anacapa lighthouse, the only major light installation on any of the Channel group. Captain George Vancouver named this island after an Indian word meaning "deception."

CALIFORNIA'S LITTLE KNOWN CHANNEL ISLANDS

By LIEUTENANT COMMANDER STANLEY A. WHEELER, *U. S. Naval Reserve*

PICTURED on a chart of the coast of Southern California, the Channel Islands suggest deliberate formation rather than the geological phenomenon which sent ancient mountain tops piercing up through the blue sea. Like units of a powerful fleet, these islands seem deployed to protect a rich and populous coast line.

There are eight major units and a dozen or more tiny satellite islets in this fleet. Under favorable weather conditions, and from suitable points of vantage, every one of the main islands may be seen from the mainland. Navy personnel who have manned ships operating out of San Pedro and San Diego have sailed among them, as have yachtsmen and commercial fishermen. Merchant ships in coastwise lanes must pass them.

One island, Santa Catalina, is well known to the world, the Catalina Island of tourist and sport fishing fame. Most of the others are strangely isolated and perhaps the least known of any parcels of land within the 48 states of the American Union. This isolation is true even though the entire group is within a 100-mile radius from the fifth largest city in the United States.

Through personal travel, correspondence, and many inquiries, the author has learned that few people are in possession of accurate information on the Channel Islands—their size, inhabitants, ownership, and resources. And few indeed are the persons who have set foot on all eight major members of the group, for only Santa Catalina has been served regularly by common carrier transportation.

For the administration of civil and criminal laws, the islands have been assigned to various coastal counties of the state of California. An examination of several recently published maps of the state indicates that some confusion exists among both map

publishers and federal and state officials as to the correct county affiliations for some of the islands.

Santa Rosa, Santa Cruz, and Santa Catalina are privately owned. The other five are federal government properties.

Geologically, most of the islands were once part of the mainland. They have similar fossils, rock formations, and plant and animal life, although long ages of separation from the continental mainland have produced some individual developments in flora and fauna. In climate the islands generally enjoy temperatures and rainfall similar to that of the near-by California coastal area. They are subjected to more winds, however.

Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo, who fought with Hernando Cortez in Mexico, was the first white man to see the shores of California, and it was he who also discovered these islands 400 years ago, and died among them. The recorded history of the group began when Cabrillo and his men, aboard two tiny ships northbound from Mexico, first sighted San Clemente and then Santa Catalina on October 7, 1542. Cabrillo's log book and the journal of one of his officers were found more than three centuries later in Madrid. The objective of the cruise was to find the fabled "Straits of Anian," possession of which would give Spain a water passage from the Pacific to the Atlantic.

While in California waters Cabrillo suf-

A GRADUATE of the University of Southern California in 1924, Lieutenant Commander Wheeler served for many years as marine editor of a Los Angeles newspaper, during which time he became extremely interested not only in America's merchant and naval ships, but also in California's coastal islands as well. His present article is the result of both extensive research and personal visits to the islands themselves.

ferred a fall which broke an arm. He tried to continue northward, but severe pain from infection together with foul weather forced him to turn about. He sought refuge in the lee of one of the islands, probably San Miguel, and died there on January 3, 1543.

Sebastián Vizcaíno, another early day navigator for Spain, saw and landed on the islands in 1609. He and other Spaniards who followed changed and added to the place names of Cabrillo. Captain George Vancouver, the English navigator who cruised in California waters in the 1790's, is credited with a few names of bays and points on both the islands and the mainland.

When the Spaniards first arrived, they found a race of people who were literally living in the stone age. All of the major islands, with the possible exception of little Santa Barbara, supported Indian villages and camps. Excavations have clearly indicated that these people lived largely on seafood, that they traveled from island to island and to the mainland, and that they obtained their first metallic objects from the ships of the white men. Their disappearance from the islands may be attributed in part to intertribal warfare, to fights with both the Spaniards and later the Russians who came to hunt for sea otters, and to disease introduced by the white men. Probably the most important reason, however, was the establishment of the Franciscan mission system on the mainland. The padres urged and made it possible for the residents of the lonely islands to move among the supporting fields and herds of the missions, and in time the islanders lost their identity among the larger mainland Indian tribes.

In 1835 Richard Henry Dana visited the California coast on a sailing ship out of Boston. He noted in his book, *Two Years Before the Mast*, that the Channel Islands were much used by smugglers to evade the loosely enforced customs laws of the Mexican government. More recently the islands were used by rumrunners and bootleggers who operated during the era of the Eighteenth Amendment.

During the American Civil War a small garrison of Union troops occupied barracks at the Isthmus on Santa Catalina.

In the 400 years since the white man first

came to California, the Channel Islands have all developed interesting local histories. They have also been fairly well explored by geologists and other scientists, and some data on them may be found in the mainland libraries and museums of southern California. But in general only Santa Catalina is widely known. The others have remained lonely outposts of the Far West's grazing and fishing industries.

The author, in attempting to learn more of the islands as they are today, found among other things that no governmental agency had complete or accurate information on the areas of the group. Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz islands were last surveyed officially by the federal government during the American Civil War, and the figures arrived at are in marked contrast to more recent private surveys made for the owners. No area figures of any type could be found for Anacapa and Santa Barbara islands.

The following table presents the best information which could be found in U. S. Navy and U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey publications. Where official figures were not available, or proved conflicting, areas were determined by planimeter readings on the latest charts available.

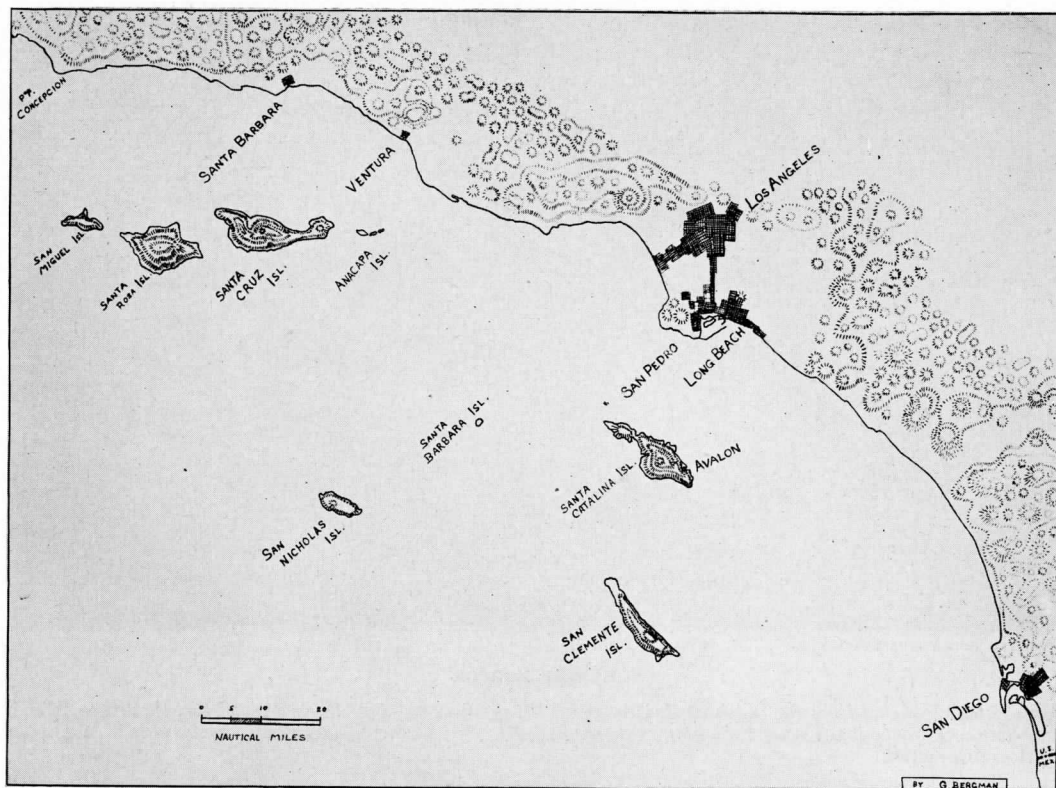
CHANNEL ISLANDS OF CALIFORNIA
In order of size

Name of Island	Area in Acres	Length in Naut. Mi.	Highest Point in Feet	California County
Santa Cruz (P)	60,740	21	2434	Santa Barbara
Santa Rosa (P)	52,758	15	1561	Santa Barbara
Santa Catalina (P)	48,438	18½	2107	Los Angeles
San Clemente	31,500	18	1964	Los Angeles
San Nicolas	13,370	8	890	Ventura
San Miguel	9,122	7½	830	Santa Barbara
Anacapa	737	4½	930	Ventura
Santa Barbara	640	1½	635	Los Angeles

(P) Indicates private ownership.
All others U. S. Government owned.

San Miguel: Island of Winds

Winds harass San Miguel nearly every day in the year. This most westerly island of the Channel Group is literally being blown into the sea, for tons of its sand and gravel disappear daily. The island is fascinating for its rugged coast line, its great sand dunes, its rocky cliffs, and its general barrenness. Water runs in a few of its deep canyons and just enough grass grows on the upper slopes to support some 3,000 head of sheep. Robert



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

CALIFORNIA'S LITTLE KNOWN CHANNEL ISLANDS

L. Brooks of Carpinteria, California, owns the livestock, and since 1916 he has leased all of San Miguel's 14 square miles from the government. He pays the Navy \$50 per month.

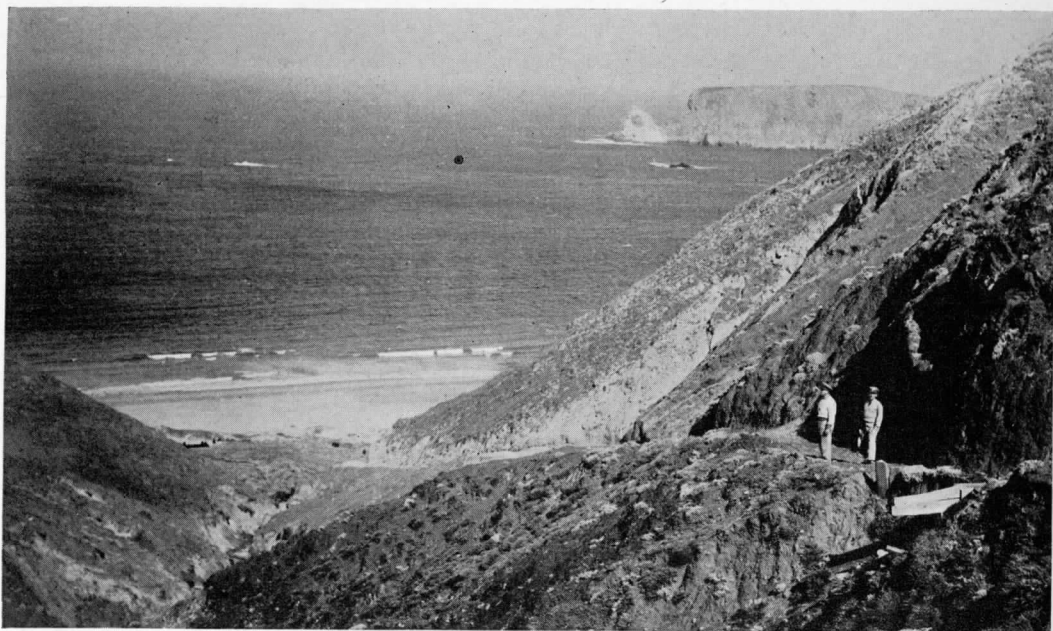
Cuyler Harbor is the best of the island's few landing places, and it is here that Cabrillo is believed to have ended his days. A small monument on a hill overlooking the harbor marks the island as the place of burial for the valiant navigator. Prince Island, a 39-acre rock pile, and largest of all the satellite islets of the group, lies off Cuyler Harbor.

The weather-beaten ranch house and barn of this island sheep ranch were built largely from materials salvaged from shipwrecks. An important contributor was the old Pacific Mail liner *Cuba*, which crashed on the west end of San Miguel in September, 1923. It was in the same week that seven U. S. Navy destroyers went aground on Point Honda, less than 50 miles away on the mainland coast.

Within the court of the ranch house, sheltered from the eternal winds, stands a tiny white schoolhouse, just large enough for two pupils and their teacher. For years the young daughters of a former ranch caretaker attended classes here. Their mother was an accredited teacher and drew a small monthly remuneration from public funds. The caretaker is dead now, and his family has moved away, but his large collection of pictures of great ocean-going liners still adorns the walls of the lonely dwelling on the upper plateau of this lonely and wind-swept island.

Santa Rosa Island

Cabrillo first saw Santa Rosa on October 18, 1542, and called it San Lucas after the day of that saint. The present name apparently came from Juan Perez, who cruised in California waters in 1774. The old California family of Carrillo, of which Leo Carrillo, the moving picture actor, is a descendant, once



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

CUYLER HARBOR

A steep trail leads up from the beach of Cuyler Harbor to the upper slopes of San Miguel Island. Prince Island, a 39-acre rock pile and the largest of several tiny satellites in the Channel Island group, can be seen in the upper right of this picture.

held it by right of a Spanish crown grant. Now it is held by the firm of Vail & Vickers, cattlemen, with offices in Los Angeles.

Spread out almost in the form of a great ray fish, this island has been one of the most commercially successful of the group. Its innumerable hills and canyons have enough grass to support some 4,000 head of cattle. Water can be found in the deeper canyons. There are a few native trees, including scrub oaks, holly, small pines, and greasewood. Cypress and eucalyptus trees planted near the ranch buildings are thriving.

As permanent residents Santa Rosa has half a dozen cattlemen, some of them with families. Bechers Bay, a broad semicircular bight on the northeast shore, has a pier from which livestock are shipped to Los Angeles stockyards. Most of the shore line is bold and rocky, and kelp beds abound on all sides.

The island has a small native fox. Ravens and many smaller birds known on the mainland can also be found, and at times wild geese come here to feed. As an experiment

more than anything else, the owners have a few elk and deer roaming their island range. The author was fortunate enough to see a rare white deer when he visited Santa Rosa.

Santa Cruz: Island of the Sacred Cross

From the sea, Santa Cruz Island is a jumble of lofty hills and mountains, with deep gorges and canyons winding in every direction. Hidden away in the very heart of this island is an ideal ranch, with a pronounced foreign atmosphere, in a climate as perfect as that of Avalon on the island to the south.

Charles Frederick Holder so described this largest of the Channel Islands in a book published in 1910. He had been charmed by almost everything he saw: the scenery, lofty trees, abundant fresh water, the vineyards, the superb horsemen who rode its range, and the game fish that took his hooks in the surrounding sea. Beyond doubt, nature has been more generous with Santa Cruz than she has with the other islands of the group.

Once used as a Mexican government penal



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

CHINESE HARBOR

San Cruz Island's lofty hills provide fine pasturage for livestock. The island has more natural resources than any other member of the Channel group. This photograph shows Chinese Harbor in the distance.

colony, and later held by the old California family of Justinian Caire, the island has several old and staunchly built stone ranch houses. The inner valley is a community unto itself, a part of early California rancho life unknown to the outside world. And yet this secret valley with its picturesque buildings and towering trees, all invisible from the sea, is but 24 miles as the crow flies from the modern city of Santa Barbara.

Today Santa Cruz is a great stock farm. Edwin L. Stanton of Los Angeles owns 54,488 acres of the total. His cattle and sheep go to Los Angeles stockyards from a picturesque little cove called Prisoners Harbor, where a sturdy pier has been built from island-grown eucalyptus logs. Ambrose Gherini of San Francisco owns more than 6,000 acres at the eastern end of the island. His sheep go to the mainland from a landing at rock-bound Scorpion Harbor. The Stanton and Gherini ranches are separated by an almost impassable range of mountain peaks and crags.

Early settlers on the island released some

domestic pigs, and now after many generations these animals have reverted to wild boars. They live in the rugged hills, and the adults are heavy, fast on their feet, and carry formidable tusks. In past years they have afforded good hunting, but now they menace young livestock and sometimes even men. With the advice of experts from the state university, Stanton has deliberately introduced hog cholera. Young boars are trapped, inoculated, and turned loose. The disease does not pass to cattle and sheep, and gradually the boar menace is being removed.

Santa Cruz cannot be dismissed without mention of the many caves which may be found on its leeward coast. The largest of them, called Painted Cave, may be entered by a medium-sized yacht. Holder described it as "more remarkable than the grotto of Capri."

More than once Santa Cruz has been considered for the site of tourist resorts. The owner of two famous hotels in California actually sought a superdude ranch site a



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

Prisoners Harbor on Santa Cruz Island is 22 nautical miles from the mainland city of Santa Barbara. From the sturdy pier constructed of eucalyptus logs grown on the island, cattle and sheep are shipped to Los Angeles stockyards.

few years ago, and it is a fair guess that this beautiful island will not always remain an isolated livestock ranch.

Anacapa and Santa Barbara: Island National Monuments

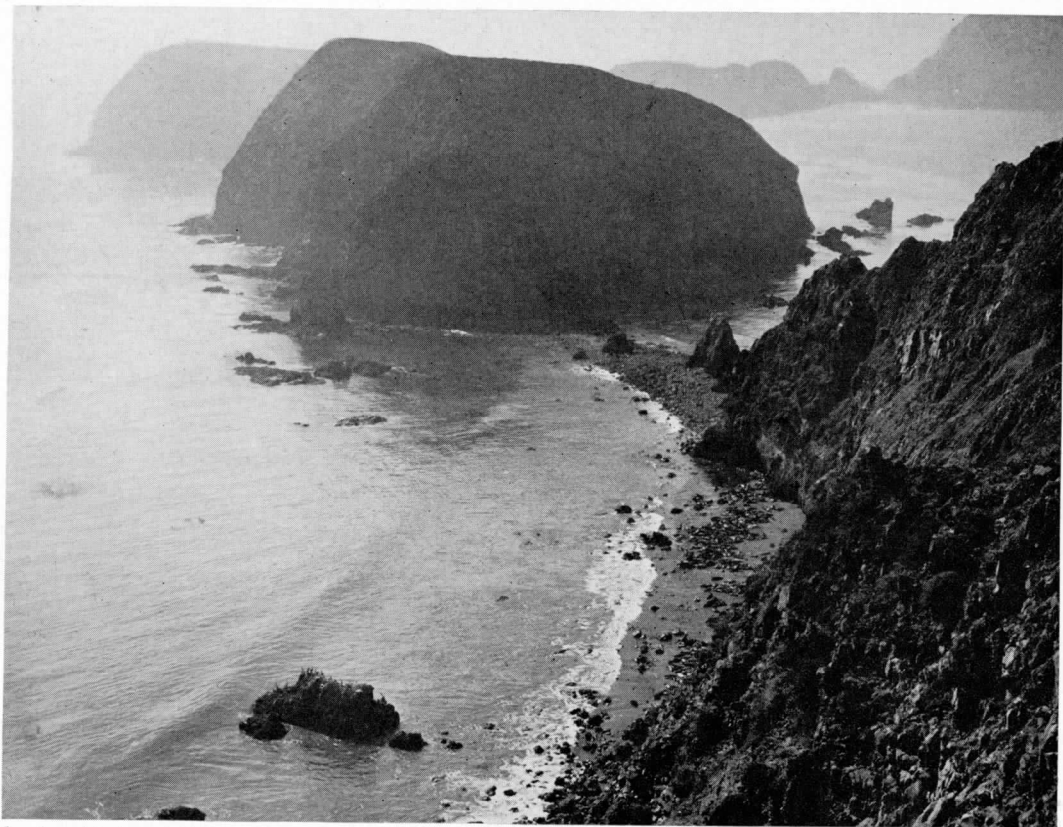
In 1938 Anacapa and Santa Barbara, the two smallest members of the Channel group, were designated as national monuments. *Science* magazine has stated that between them they are preserving for nature lovers "more than eight endemic flowering plants, some thirty endemic mammals and birds and sixteen mollusks."

Anacapa is a narrow chain of three old mountain ridges, weather-beaten, crumbling, and geologically in its last stages of existence. So narrow is the central part of this island chain that a man can stand on the high

sharp ridge and hurl a rock on either side into the surging sea below. Great kelp beds surround all of Anacapa. These beds are alive with fish, which in turn serve as food for countless thousands of sea lions.

Less than 11 miles from Ventura County, Anacapa is the nearest to the mainland of any of the Channel Islands. It supports the only major lighthouse in the group. The normal peace-time steamer lane between Los Angeles and San Francisco is close by this light.

Anacapa's only permanent residents are the light keeper and his family. Fishermen sometimes occupy shacks on the rocky beaches. The island supports some wild grass and wild flowers, the latter including a sturdy sea dahlia plant. The light keeper can go rabbit hunting any time he cares to,



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

ANACAPA ISLAND

This island, less than 11 miles from the California mainland, is a narrow chain of three old mountain ridges that rise above the sea. Weather-beaten, pounded by the surf, and crumbling, the island is geologically in its last stages of existence. Hundreds of sea lions can be seen on the beach shown in the center of this picture.

for descendants of domestic hares abound on the eastern unit of the Anacapa chain. The island's name comes from a Chumash Indian place word meaning "deception," and is said to have been first recorded by Captain Vancouver.

Santa Barbara Island, which lies 42 nautical miles southwest of the Los Angeles Harbor light, is economically the least useful of all the Channel group. It has about a square mile of rocks and poor soil. Kelp beds surround its rocky shore line and precipitous cliffs make it difficult to land on.

In past years a few abortive attempts have been made to dry farm this little island. But even sheep grazing has not proved successful, principally because there is no all-year source of fresh water.

Sebastián Vizcaíno sailed close by on

St. Barbara's Day, in December of 1602, and his name for the island has carried through for more than three centuries.

San Nicolas: Island of the Lost Woman

Fifty-three miles out from the mainland, San Nicolas is the most remote of the Channel Islands. And like San Miguel, it has almost constant winds. It is treeless, but in past years some 2,500 head of sheep have been supported by the grass that grows on the high central plateau. The sheep have been removed for the duration of the war. Normally the island is under jurisdiction of the Navy, which has maintained a weather station there for years. In November of 1942 the U. S. Army took over jurisdiction for the duration.

Eight miles northwest of San Nicolas is



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

SANTA BARBARA ISLAND

This, the smallest and least productive of the eight members in the California Channel Island group, is the home of countless sea lions and sea birds. Its rocky shore line is difficult to land on and the entire island is surrounded by great beds of kelp.

Begg Rock, a tiny mass of stone extending 15 feet out of surrounding deep water, and so hazardous to navigation that it has been marked with a whistle buoy. A sailing ship, the *John Begg*, crashed and sank here in 1824.

The east end of San Nicolas Island is a sharply pointed sand spit where the sea pounds in on both sides. At the very tip of this spit, and over the extending reef, one may view the unusual spectacle of great breakers colliding with each other head on. This gleaming white triangle of sand, half a mile long and flanked with its towering foaming breakers, is a fascinating sight from the cliff above.

San Nicolas once supported a comparatively large native population. About 1830 a boat came out to remove the last of these people to the mainland mission in Santa Barbara city. It is recorded that the Indians were willing enough to leave. In the act of embarking, one young woman, already aboard the boat, demanded that she be put ashore again, claiming that her infant child had been left behind. She disappeared in the

hills as a storm was developing, and the boat, after waiting for a time, was forced to weigh anchor and sail away.

Before a return voyage from Santa Barbara could be arranged, this boat was wrecked, and the woman on San Nicolas was all but forgotten. Fishermen were requested to be on the lookout for her, but no one found her until 20 years later. Then a group of sea otter hunters sighted her. Captain George C. Nidever of Santa Barbara was sent out with Indian scouts and runners, and after several days of searching they found the "Lost Woman." Alone she had survived for two decades among the eroded cliffs and great sand dunes of the island. Shell fish, birds, and grass roots had been her food. When she was taken to Santa Barbara it was found that not an Indian lived on the mainland who could understand her dialect. She died within a few weeks. Holder records that after the death of the "Lost Woman" the Franciscan fathers sent her pelican and gull skin suit of clothes to Rome, where it remained on exhibit for years in the Vatican Museum.



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

SAN NICOLAS ISLAND

Corral Harbor is the principal landing place on lonely San Nicolas Island. Fifty-three nautical miles from the nearest point on the mainland, this island is the most remote and the most isolated member of the Channel group. Kelp beds and reefs make this "harbor" anything but a safe place to anchor. Unrelenting winds greet all visitors to this lonely spot.

San Clemente: The Volcanic Isle

By an executive order of November 7, 1934, San Clemente Island passed from the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Commerce to the control of the Secretary of the Navy. Today it is the site of the U. S. Fleet Training Base, an activity within the Eleventh Naval District. Civilian vessels are forbidden to pass within one mile of its shore line.

San Clemente has an area of almost 50 square miles and its weird looking masses of lava rock, sand, and gravel are the remaining visible fragments of a gigantic volcano. Its windward coast has few anchorages and beaches and the eroded hills on this side are low in elevation. The eastern shore, however, has towering cliffs of lava rock, and a few landing places. Hanging cactus plants line many deep canyons. Wild goats, sheep, foxes, ravens, and eagles inhabit countless gloomy caves. Even the deep water of the sea takes on a dark tinge in reflecting the black cliffs above. The Inferno of Dante could well be pictured here.

For many years the island was a successful

sheep ranch, more than 13,000 head of stock having grazed at one time. The federal government leased the land to several successive tenants, some paying as much as \$3,000 a year. A few springs of fresh water, a moderate annual rainfall, and the comparatively flat top of the island, made for profitable grazing.

Lieutenant Commander S. E. Flynn, (M.C.), U. S. Navy, described Mosquito Harbor on the east coast as "the most picturesque spot on the island."¹

In 1913, as a boy, the author visited Mosquito Harbor soon after Al Shade, a veteran boatman, had established a small fish camp there for use of sportsmen. Today the fig trees which Shade planted more than 30 years ago are among the largest to be found in California. There is just enough water from a near-by spring to support these two trees.

¹ See "The History of San Clemente Island," in the October, 1942, issue of U. S. Naval Institute PROCEEDINGS.



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

SAN CLEMENTE

Mosquito Harbor is the most picturesque spot on San Clemente Island. Its narrow beach of black sand is at the base of a towering cliff of lava rock.

The Island of St. Catharine

Philip III once claimed Santa Catalina as part of his Spanish Colonial Empire. Many owners have followed Philip under both the Mexican and United States flags. An English syndicate found gold mining unprofitable. A resident of Los Angeles tried to subdivide parts of the island, but found few buyers for his lots.

Phineas Banning, who came west from Wilmington, Delaware, and founded the town of Wilmington, California, in 1854, became an owner after others had failed to exploit the island. It was under the guidance of General Banning and his sons that Santa Catalina became famous as a tourist attraction. Associated with the Bannings for a time were members of the Patton family. As a youth and young man Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., U. S. Army, spent his vacations and developed his penchant for ocean sailing at Catalina.

The late William Wrigley, Jr., of Chicago, bought the island in 1919, and since then millions of the Wrigley fortune have gone

into improvements. In boom years as many as 700,000 tourists have crossed the San Pedro Channel in Wrigley-owned steamers and flying boats. The little town of Avalon, with an all-year population of 2,500, and facing on a beautiful bay, is well supplied with hotels, apartment houses, and vacation villas.

Most of the life of Santa Catalina centers about Avalon, which took its name from the happy island village of Arthurian legends. The balance of the island is largely wilderness, in which may be found private villas on little coves, a colorful stock farm in the mountainous center, and a small resort settlement at the Isthmus.

Santa Catalina, the "Magic Isle" of Wrigley's advertising copy writers, is famous because it has been attractively and skillfully improved for vacationists. Its easy accessibility from the city of Los Angeles insures its future when peace comes to the world.

In war time the island provides the location for a U. S. Maritime Commission train-



Courtesy Lieutenant Commander S. A. Wheeler, USNR.

EMERALD BAY

Santa Catalina Island's many coves and bays are favorite spots for southern California yachtsmen in peace time. This photograph shows beautiful little Emerald Bay, a 20-mile run out from Los Angeles Harbor. Under war-time regulations, the Channel Islands are closed to yachts.

ing school for merchant seamen. These trainees have the famed St. Catharine Hotel for their living quarters and they use the million dollar Avalon Casino for their classroom work. Coast Guardsmen have a school among the palms on Isthmus Cove.

No account of the Channel Islands would be complete that omitted fishing. The ancient Indian inhabitants of the group lived principally on seafood, and they had a large variety to choose from. The island waters still abound in swimming fish of many kinds, and the rocky shore lines are the habitat of abalones, lobsters, and mussels.

Pacific coast shipping has had to reckon with these islands. Commander William A. Mason, U. S. Navy (Retired), who in 1939 compiled records of strandings and wrecks of vessels on the coasts of California, Oregon, and Washington, showed that more than 25 ships have met their doom on the rocks of the group.

At this writing the Channel Islands are closed to public travel under war-time regu-

lations of the Navy. Coast Guardsmen enforce the regulations, and only with a Coast Guard permit may persons with legitimate business land on any of them. The islands are used in our system of coastal lookout stations and for weather observation stations, and in these two functions they play a definite part in our war effort.

It is quite possible that the rather commonplace name of Channel Islands will some day give way to a more appropriate "Cabrillo Islands." A California historian and writer, Aubrey Drury, has made this suggestion and his plan has the support of the California Historical Society and several other influential organizations.

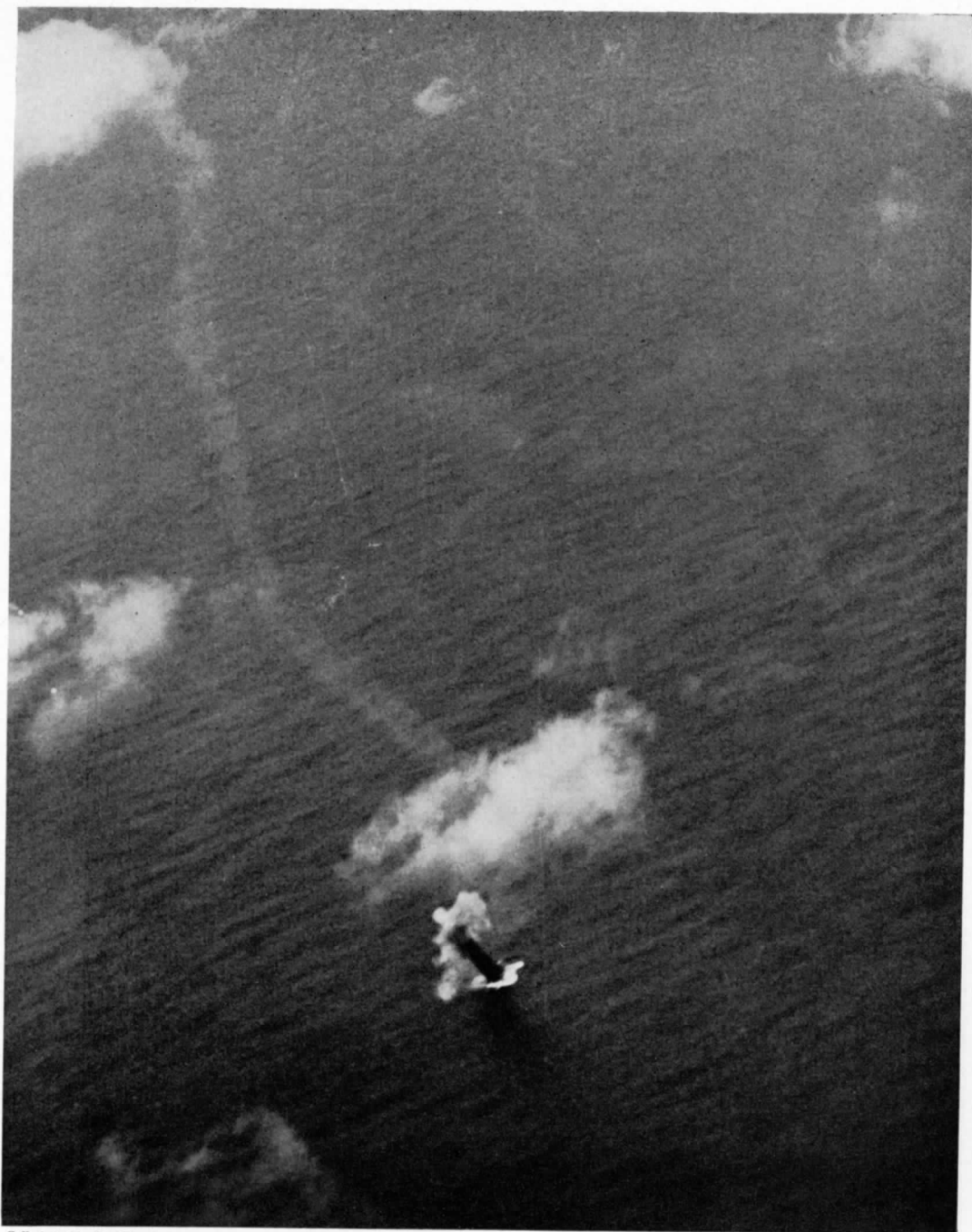
Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo made his daring cruise up the west coast of North America only 50 years after the arrival of Columbus in the New World. To give his name to the islands which he discovered and among which he died would in some measure reserve for him a deservedly larger page in the history of maritime exploration.



Official U. S. Coast Guard Photo

INVADING MAKIN

A U. S. Coast Guard manned tank lighter heads for the beach at Makin, bringing a heavy gun and tractor. Ship in the background is a Coast Guard manned combat transport operating as part of the Navy Task Force. American flyers were bombing the center of the island when the picture was taken.



Official U. S. Navy Photograph

FLYING BOAT HISSES INTO THE OCEAN

As a Japanese plane cuts the water, nose down, a cloud of steam plumes upward. The faint trail of smoke shows the path of her dive. She was beaten in combat by a U. S. Navy Liberator (PB4Y).